

**Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council**  
**Draft Quarterly Meeting Minutes ~ March 03, 2023**  
**via Microsoft Teams and In-Person**  
Agency of Transportation, Dill Building  
2178 Airport Rd, Barre, VT 05641  
**Conference Room #122**

<b>In Person:</b>	Kaiya Andrews, Anastasia Douglas, Johnathan Gardner, Mike Gruteke, Michelle John
<b>In MS Teams:</b>	Amanda Bianchi, Danielle Brier, Betsy Choquette, Kate Daly, Melanie Feddersen, David Frye, Ted Looby, Lindsey Owen, Candice Price, Adam Poulin, Beth Sightler, Jesse Suter, Courtney Quinlan, Havah Walther, Emerson Wheeler, Crista Yagjian,
<b>Absent:</b>	Emerson Wheeler, Steve Kieselstein, John Spinney
<b>Support Staff:</b>	None
<b>Guests:</b>	Mathew LeFleur, Carmen Phillips (support staff), Dion Lashay
<b>VTDDC Staff:</b>	Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Chelsea Hayward

## 1. Welcome:

Mike called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. He welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

- **Ice Breaker**

Everyone introduced themselves, said their preferred pronouns, and answered the ice breaker question: “What needs to happen in today’s meeting for you to leave feeling this was a great use of your time and expertise?” Most people said that they wanted to be sure everyone present would have a chance to speak and contribute to the Council’s work today.

- **Guidelines for Hybrid Meetings**

Kirsten briefly went over general expectations to having a successful in-person and remote meeting.

- **Assign roles**

- Jargon Buster was David
- Keeper of the Rudder was Kaiya
- Uplifter was Johnathan
- Facilitator was Mike
- Timekeeper was Anastasia

- Processor was Crista

Kirsten noted a minor change to the agenda: Public comment has been moved to 11:00 AM to accommodate a guest who has asked to speak. Kirsten explained that public comment is a time for Council members to listen to members of the public who want to share some information with us. Members should ask clarifying questions but not try to problem-solve any issue raised.

- **Adopt Meeting Minutes from December 2, 2022**

**Motion:** David made the motion to accept the meeting minutes from December with no corrections. Kaiya seconded. Motion accepted unanimously with a one abstention.

**Motion passed.**

## 2. Activity – small groups:

- **Introduction by Policy Committee**

Susan summarized what was happening in the legislature. She shared VTDDC's 2023 legislative platform, and asked members to think about which of the platform items they feel most strongly about.

- **Letter to Legislative Committees**

Susan suggested that the Council send a letter urging action on VTDDC's priority issues. It is powerful when the Council, which represents people from all over the state, speaks in a unified voice, Susan said.

The Policy Committee is concerned that there is not a stable system for people with I/DD in Vermont because of the workforce crisis. Of those who have been approved to reside with a shared living provider, 100 are temporarily placed in hotels due to the housing shortage.

Anastasia asked which bills of interest have “crossed over” from one chamber to the other, since these are more likely to pass. She also asked which budget items have more momentum. Susan explained that the House budget includes \$1 million for new quality assurance staff to assist the DD System. The House budget provided generous increases for Home Health providers but only a 4% increase for the Developmental Disabilities Services Agencies.

Susan asked, “What would make a giant improvement in your life if the problem was addressed?” Council members mentioned themes taking place in their lives that they’d like to have mentioned within the letter. Members emphasized:

- 10% wage increase for support staff and supported living providers. The House budget has 4%, which is not adequate to recruit and retain staff.
- Housing, equal access to housing, and safe, accessible housing that meets the needs of people with disabilities.
- Inclusion in schools and law prohibiting seclusion and restraint.

Staff will write letters focusing on these issues to appropriate legislative committees on behalf of the Council. They will share the drafts next week.

### **3. Public Comment:**

Dion LaSchay talked about the second covid outbreak and symptoms of long covid. He has requested that support staff wear masks when they serve him and his partner. However, there was push back by staff and his case manager, who refused to require Dion’s staff to wear a mask. Dion was told that if they continued to insist on masks, their agency would no longer serve them.

Dion would like to see masking be taken seriously as an accommodation as part of the ADA. He said that his case manager had told him, “Just because one person uses a cane doesn’t mean everyone needs a cane.” But asking for guests to wear a mask before entering a person’s home is no different than asking them to remove their shoes, Dion said.

Melanie asked for permission to mention Dion’s story to the Developmental Services Division. Dion agreed.

### **4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair:**

- **Meet the Candidate for Chair**

Anastasia ran for Council Chair un-opposed. She said that she is excited and nervous about taking on this leadership position. However, she has had a lot of experience serving on various committees and feels it is an appropriate next step.

## **VOTE 1**

**Motion:** Kate made the motion to elect Anastasia as Chair. David seconded. There was no additional discussion. **Motion passed: 17-1-0.**

Kate said she'd like to serve as Chair someday.

- **Meet the Candidates for Vice-Chair**

Candice and Crista ran for co-Vice-Chair. Havah read Candice's statement. Candice described herself as loyal, patient, and a strong advocate. Crista said she would continue to support the Council's vision and Five-Year State-Plan. Crista has served as co-Vice-Chair for the previous year.

Council members spoke positively about the candidates.

## **VOTE 2**

**Motion:** David made the motion to elect Candice and Crista as co-Vice Chairs. Havah seconded. There was no additional discussion. **Motion passed: 16-0-2.**

## **5. Executive Director's Report by Kirsten Murphy:**

- **NACDD Conference**

Looking toward the future, Kirsten said staff were planning to attend the NACDD conference with members. The Executive Committee would have the final say on who would attend for 2023 and spots were limited. Everyone attending would be supported. It will take place in July in Orlando, Florida. Council Members and Staff would fly together as a group. Interested members should contact Kirsten in the next six weeks.

Kate voiced excitement to attend at some point, perhaps this year?

- **Story telling social**

Pre-covid VTDDC hosted its first Story Telling social. The event was powerful and gave Vermonters a platform to speak their truth in a place where important decisions are made. Kirsten announced that the Council is planning to bring this event back, and she invited members to write a story or poem, video tape, or whatever medium worked for them. The official event will take place in the evening on April 20, 2023 at the State House.

Candice plans to participate and asked for a partner to join her in telling a story.

- **Housing report**

The legislature charged VTDDC with researching what other states do for housing for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The Council collaborated with Green Mountain Self-Advocates and hired a researcher to write the report. Eight different housing models were summarized, and a ninth will be added at the request of parents.

If people receiving services through the Developmental Disabilities System had access to new service-supported housing, the report estimates that at a minimum 600 units would be needed.

Kate gave feedback. She said that housing should be in areas that had consistent public transportation along with the option to walk to amenities.

- **Appreciation**

Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to Mike Gruteke and Kaiya Andrews for their time serving on the Council.

Council members shared words of admiration and appreciation to the two members whose time on the Council had come to an end.

## **6. Lunch:**

*Lunch went from 12:00pm to 1:00 pm.*

Council members chatted casually while they ate. Beth Sightler answered a few questions about agencies and the services they provide, as well as leadership.

## **7. Report from the Policy Committee:**

Susan mentioned that March was National Developmental Disabilities Month. All Councils were asked by NACDD to host their congressional meetings during March. Several members of the Policy Committee and council members met with Becca Balint, who attended in person! The Council is looking to Senator Balint as an ally; she has been public about the fact that one of her children is on the autism spectrum.

Michelle said Rep. Balint was present and engaged. She took notes and asked questions. Council members left the meeting feeling that action would take place.

David talked about meeting with Senator Bernie Sanders's staff. He shared a story about a time when he had difficulty receiving Social Security benefits. He reached out to the Senator's office and the issue was resolved quickly. If it wasn't for Senator Sanders's office, David said, he would not have gotten his benefits! David also felt Senator Peter Welsh's staff actively listened and participated in the conversation.

Lindsey voiced concern for people with disabilities in jail who have committed suicide; there has been a sharp increase in these incidents. She wants there to be more follow-up to find out what happened, how it happened, and what steps of prevention could take place to stop suicide in correctional facilities from happening again in the future.

March is Budget season, when the Council and its DD Network Partners seek their Congressional appropriation through the lobbies employed by NACDD. One way to secure a commitment to financial support for the DD Network is to have congressional delegates sign a letter of support, sometimes called a "Dear Colleague" Letter. Becca Balint is the first Vermont congressperson to sign this letter in many years.

## **8. Report from the Membership Committee:**

The Membership Committee interviewed several possible candidates to join the Council. Kirsten shared pictures of the candidates with a brief description. Michelle spoke on behalf of the Membership Committee, with Mike and Amanda adding their thoughts.

The Membership Committee recommended the following:

- Justin Thunderbear Deth
- Kele Bourdreau
- Collins Twing

### **VOTE 3**

**Motion:** Amanda made the motion to accept all three candidates as recommended by the Membership Committee. Kaiya seconded. There was no additional discussion.

**Motion passed: 17-0-0.**

### **9. Mikes Farewell Remarks:**

Mike thanked everyone for their support during the time he served as Chair. He reminded everyone that they have friends on the Council and can use one another as resources to talk with.

### **10. Summarize Meeting:**

Crista noticed that there was a lot of participation. She was delighted by the election and the new voices who would be joining them. VTDDC is a national model for how to efficiently and effectively meet with Congressional Delegates. She was proud of the Council and the accessibility that goes into it.

Johnathan was happy to inspire. He said, “Keep doing what you’re doing! We got a lot done and make sure to keep at it. Anastasia as the new chair will do well. Keep it on keeping on!”

### **11. Adjourn:**

The meeting adjourned at 1:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chelsea Hayward

Att.

Attachment A – Roll-call Vote

Name	Vote 1			Vote 2			Vote 3		
	Yes	A.	No	Yes	A.	No	Yes	A.	No
<b>Kaiya Andrews</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Amanda Bianchi</b>							x		
<b>Danielle Brier</b>							x		
<b>Betsy Choquette</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Kate Daly</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Anastasia Douglas</b>		x		x			x		
<b>Melanie Feddersen</b>	x			x			x		
<b>David Frye</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Johnathan Gardner</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Mike Gruteke</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Michelle John</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Steve Kieselstein</b>									
<b>Ted Looby</b>	x			x					
<b>Lindsey Owen, Esq.</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Adam Poulin</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Candice Price</b>	x				x		x		
<b>Courtney Quinlan</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Beth Sightler</b>	x			x			x		
<b>John Spinney</b>									
<b>Jesse Suter</b>	x			x					
<b>Havah Walther</b>	x			x			x		
<b>Emerson Wheeler</b>									
<b>Crista Yagjian</b>	x				x		x		
Write in others as needed									

Those in grey did not attend the meeting, were not present to vote, or passed their vote along to another Council member to share with the Council. [REDACTED]